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ACTION OCS-06

INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 ARA-00 AMAD-01 CA-02 /009 W
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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6735

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTIAGO 04162

FOR CA/OCS/EMR JIM RITCHIE

AND ARA/SC JIM SWIGERT

Chile Project (#S199900030)

U.S. Department of State

Release ☒ Excise ☐ Deny ☐

Declassify: In Part ☐ In Full ☐

Exemption(s) ☐

E. O. L2356: N/A
TAGS: CASC, CI (WEISFEILER, BORIS)
SUBJ: W/W: CASE OF BORIS WEISFEILER

REF: (A) SANTIAGO 03798 (B) SANTIAGO 724

L. BRADLEY GRAHAM, CORRESPONDENT FOR THE WASHINGTON POST, ONCE AGAIN VISITED SANTIAGO TO DISCUSS THE WEISFEILER CASE. HE SPOKE WITH THE CONSUL GENERAL AND ONE OF THE VICE CONSULS ON JUNE 24TH. ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH HE TALKED TO THE AMBASSADOR. HE ASKED QUESTIONS TO CLARIFY SPECIFIC POINTS AS HE HAD ALREADY QUERIED OTHERS OUTSIDE THE EMBASSY. GRAHAM IS PRESENTLY IN BOGOTA TO COVER THE POPE'S VISIT. HE WAS HOPEFUL OF WRITING THE STORY ON HIS PLANE FLIGHT TO BOGOTA SOMETIME JUNE 26. GRAHAM WAS UNSURE OF THE PUBLICATION DATE OF THE ARTICLE. HE TOLD AMBASSADOR HE IS INCLINED TO BELIEVE WEISFEILER MAY STILL BE ALIVE, AS MUCH AS ANYTHING BECAUSE OF THE CONFIDENCE OF SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES THAT HE COULD SURVIVE ALMOST ANYTHING. HIS STORY WILL PROBABLY QUOTE THE CONSUL GENERAL BY NAME ON SEVERAL POINTS, QUOTATIONS WHICH THE AMBASSADOR SUBSEQUENTLY APPROVED BEING USED.

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2. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT GRAHAM ARTICLE,
DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN MAY DRAW ON FOLLOWING:

BORIS WEISFEILER WAS BORN IN THE SOVIET UNION IN 1941 AND BECAME A NATURALIZED UNITED STATES CITIZEN. HE WAS AN EXPERIENCED OUTDOORSMAN HAVING PREVIOUSLY TAKEN WALKING TRIPS IN PERU, NEPAL AND ALASKA. DURING HIS CHRISTMAS VACATION IN 1984 FROM HIS POSITION AS A PROFESSOR IN THE MATHEMATICS DEPARTMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY, HE TRAVELLED TO SANTIAGO, CHILE BY PLANE FROM NEW YORK CITY. UPON ARRIVING IN SANTIAGO ON CHRISTMAS DAY HE TRAVELLED BY BUS TO LOS ANGELES, A CHILEAN CITY THAT LIES APPROXIMATELY 300 MILES SOUTH OF THE CAPITAL. THE FOLLOWING DAY HE SET OUT FROM HIS HOTEL BY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, IT IS BELIEVED, IN THE DIRECTION OF THE FOOTHILLS OF THE ANDES NEAR A SPOT CALLED EL SALTO DEL LAJA FROM WHICH HE PLANNED TO HIKE NORTHWARD. BETWEEN DECEMBER 26 AND JANUARY 4, WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ABOUT HIS ACTIVITIES OR WHEREABOUTS, BUT MUST ASSUME THAT HE WAS BACKPACKING ALONE AND CAMPING OUT ALONG THE ROUTE THAT HE HAD BEEN TAKING ALONG THE NUBLE RIVER.

THE AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 3, HE ENCOUNTERED TWO LOCAL MEN WHO WERE WORKING AS SHEPHERDS AND WHO HAD AN ENCAMPMENT SOUTH OF THE CONFLUENCE OF THE NUBLE AND LOS SAUCES RIVER. THEY INVITED WEISFEILER TO SHARE THEIR DINNER AND TO SPEND THE NIGHT IN THEIR LEAN-TO WHICH HE DID. THE NEXT MORNING HE RESUMED HIS JOURNEY AND LATER IN THE DAY MET THE BROTHER OF ONE OF THE SHEPHERDS ON THE TRAIL THAT FOLLOWS THE NUBLE, BUT THEY DID NOT SPEAK TO EACH OTHER. ACCORDING TO ALL OFFICIAL REPORTS, THIS MAN WAS THE LAST PERSON TO SEE WEISFEILER ALIVE.

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NOTHING FURTHER WAS KNOWN ABOUT WEISFEILER UNTIL JANUARY, 1985, WHEN HIS BACKPACK WAS FOUND ON THE BANK OF THE NUBLE RIVER AT A POINT ABOUT 1,800 METERS DOWNSTREAM FROM WHERE HE ENCOUNTERED THE SHEPHERD'S BROTHER. THAT DISCOVERY LED TO A SERIES OF SEARCHES CARRIED OUT BY THE LOCAL CARABINEROS (POLICE), FIREMEN AND FARMERS IN ADDITION TO SEARCHES OF THE RIVER BY CHILEAN NAVAL FROGMEN. THE COURT

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IN THE NEARBY TOWN OF SAN CARLOS OPENED AN OFFICIAL INQUIRY INTO THE CASE OF WEISFEILER'S DISAPPEARANCE AND FINALLY CONCLUDED THAT HE WAS MOST LIKELY DEAD AND THAT THE PROBABLE CAUSE OF DEATH WAS DROWNING. IN MARCH 1985, THE COURT DECLARED THE CASE CLOSED FOR LACK OF FURTHER EVIDENCE.

THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN SANTIAGO HAS CONTINUED TO INVESTIGATE THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PROFESSOR WEISFEILER EVER SINCE WORD WAS RECEIVED THAT HE WAS LAST SEEN ALIVE ON JANUARY 4, 1985. THE EMBASSY HAS SOUGHT THE ASSISTANCE OF LOCAL POLICE AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN ORGANIZING SEARCH PARTIES AND HAS BEEN IN CONTINUOUS CONTACT WITH THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT IN AN EFFORT TO DETERMINE WHAT HAPPENED TO PROFESSOR WEISFEILER. CONSULAR OFFICERS HAVE MADE SEVERAL TRIPS TO THE REGION WHERE HE DISAPPEARED IN AN ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN FURTHER INFORMATION.

3. SUGGESTED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOLLOW (INCLUDING Q AND AS PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED IN REF B):

Q: DOES THE DEPARTMENT BELIEVE PROFESSOR WEISFEILER IS ALIVE?

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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 SANTIAGO 04162

FOR CA/OCS/EMR JIM RITCHIE

AND ARA/SC JIM SWIGERT

E. O. L2356: N/A
TAGS: CASC, CI (WEISFEILER, BORIS)
SUBJ: W/W: CASE OF BORIS WEISFEILER

A: THAT IS WHAT OUR EMBASSY HAS BEEN TRYING TO DETERMINE.

4. Q: IS THERE ANY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT WEISFEILER MAY
BE HELD BY A GROUP OF EX-NAZIS LIVING IN CHILE CALLED
"COLONIA DIGNIDAD?"

A: AS STATED, WE HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT HAPPENED TO
PROFESSOR WEISFEILER FROM THE TIME HE WAS LAST SEEN.

5. Q: HAS THE EMBASSY MADE ANY EFFORT TO REOPEN THE
JUDICIAL INQUEST INTO WEISFEILER'S DISAPPEARANCE?

A: IN THE EYES OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, THE
WEISFEILER CASE REMAINS COMPLETELY OPEN, AND IT WILL
CONTINUE TO REMAIN OPEN, UNTIL IT HAS BEEN SOLVED TO THE
SATISFACTION OF ALL PARTIES CONCERNED. THE SAME PRINCIPLE
APPLIES WORLDWIDE IN THE CASE OF ANY MISSING UNITED STATES
CITIZEN. AS SOON AS THE EMBASSY BECAME AWARE OF MR.
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WEISFEILER'S DISAPPEARANCE, EFFORTS WERE MADE TO DETERMINE
HIS WHEREABOUTS. CONSULAR OFFICERS MADE REPEATED VISITS
TO THE AREA WHERE HE WAS LAST REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN SEEN.

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WE INTERVIEWED ALL THOSE WE BELIEVED TO HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CASE. DIPLOMATIC NOTES WERE SENT TO THE CHILEAN FOREIGN MINISTRY REQUESTING OFFICIAL ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION IN SOLVING THIS DISAPPEARANCE. WE APPRECIATE THE COOPERATION WE HAVE RECEIVED THUS FAR FROM THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT BUT WE ARE ALSO QUITE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THE CASE REMAINS UNSOLVED AND WE CONTINUE TO ASK THEIR HELP IN FINDING ANY NEW EVIDENCE OR INFORMATION THAT WOULD ASSIST IN A SOLUTION.

6. Q: WHY DID WEISFEILER TRAVEL TO CHILE ALONE, IN THE MIDST OF THE END-OF YEAR HOLIDAYS, NOT KNOWING ANY LANGUAGES OTHER THAN RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH WITHOUT INFORMING THE U. S. EMBASSY?

A. THE EMBASSY DOES NOT KNOW WHAT MOTIVATED MR. WEISFEILER TO COME TO CHILE, OR HIS PRECISE ITINERARY WHILE IN CHILE. FROM WHAT WE HAVE DETERMINED, MR. WEISFEILER WAS SINGLE AND HAD NO RELATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES. LIKE THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF U. S. TOURISTS WHO VISIT CHILE (THERE ARE SOME 2800 PER YEAR) HE DID NOT NOTIFY THE EMBASSY OF HIS ARRIVAL. THERE IS NO REGULATION WHICH REQUIRES ANY U. S. CITIZEN TO REGISTER HIS PRESENCE WITH ANY U. S. EMBASSY WHILE VISITING A FOREIGN COUNTRY.

7. Q: DOES THE EMBASSY KNOW THE REASON WHY THE BACKPACK FOUND BY THE CARABINEROS NEAR THE PLACE WHERE THE ACCIDENT OCCURRED, CONTAINED NEITHER MONEY NOR PASSPORT?

A: THE EMBASSY HAS NO IDEA WHY MR. WEISFEILER'S PASSPORT
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HAS NOT BEEN FOUND. WE ARE CURIOUS ABOUT THAT, OF COURSE. AGAIN, WE WOULD WELCOME ANY CLARIFYING INFORMATION FROM ANY SOURCE THAT IS IN ANY WAY RELATED TO MR. WEISFEILER AND WOULD ASSIST US IN DETERMINING WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM. BARNES
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